

## **CITY POLICY ADDRESSING PROTESTS IN THE COMMUNITY**

**It is the City of Bloomington's policy to respect each individual's right to freedom of speech to the greatest extent possible. It is also the City's policy to enforce the law, including laws that prohibit disorderly conduct and excessive noise. Towards these goals, we affirm the following:**

- ◆ Citizens have the right to picket on public streets, sidewalks and rights of way, and in parks. The Bloomington Police Department (BPD) will not interfere with picketing on these premises unless the picketers are obstructing sidewalks or streets, preventing access to a building or threatening injury to people or property. BPD will not confine picketers to specified areas unless it is necessary to prevent an imminent breach of the peace and unless there is no other, less burdensome, alternative.
- ◆ Individuals have the right to use offensive language, as long as the language does not cross the line dividing merely offensive language from language that is "fighting words" or language that threatens violence. "Fighting words" are words that by their very utterance cause injury or tend to incite the listener to an immediate breach of the peace.
- ◆ Individuals have the right to free speech, but they do not have the right to be unreasonably loud. BPD has the right to take appropriate action when individuals are violating the noise ordinance or otherwise breaching the peace.
- ◆ The City of Bloomington does not want to have to arrest people involved in public demonstrations. Whenever reasonably possible, BPD will warn people that they are violating the law and ask them to change their behavior before arresting them. The City expects that individuals will comply with reasonable requests.
- ◆ Citizens do not have the right to engage in violence or damage property, and if they do, BPD will take appropriate action.

**CONTACT PERSON:** If a situation involving protests develops during the workday, then Penni Sims, Director of Communications, will be the primary spokesperson for the City (349-3569). If a situation develops outside of the workday, then Chief of Police Mike Hostetler or his designee will be the primary spokesperson for the City (339-4477). For legal questions about protests, contact Michael Flory, Assistant City Attorney (349-3426); for questions about anti-hate activities and resources, call Marsha Bradford, Director, Safe and Civil City Program (349-3560), or Barbara McKinney, Director and Attorney, Bloomington Human Rights Commission (349-3429).